

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 232101Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0380
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
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AMEMBASSY NASSAU
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
USINT HAVANA

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINGSTON 2805

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, JM
SUBJECT: SPECULATION ON COALITION
GOVERNMENT

1. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS THERE HAS BEEN CONSIDERABLE
SPECULATION BY INFORMED POLITICAL OBSERVERS ON POSSIBILITY
OF COALITION GOVERNMENT. CLEANER PRESS COLUMNISTS SUCH
AS JOHN HEARNE AND WILMOT PERKINS AND MANAGING EDITOR
HECTOR WINTER, AND SOME JAMAICA LABOR PARTY POLITICIANS
HAVE BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT. ALTHOUGH ALL OF THESE PEOPLE
ARE UNUSUALLY WELL INFORMED AND ASTUTE, THEY DO NOT
APPEAR TO BE REFLECTING ANY INSIDE INFORMATION IN
DISCUSSING PROSPECTS FOR A COALITION GOVERNMENT BUT
RATHER REACHING OUT FOR SOME BELIEVABLE WAY FOR
JAMAICA OUT OF ITS PRESENT POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TROUGH.
THE LEADING SPECULATORS ARE EITHER MEMBERS OF THE
OPPOSITION, OR, LIKE HEARNE, DISENCHANTED PNP MEMBERS.
WHEN AN EMBASSY OFFICER RECENTLY ASKED JLP CHAIRMAN
FRANK PHIPPS HOW SERIOUS THAT PARTY IS ABOUT A
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COALITION, PHIPPS REPLIED IT IS THE LAST THING THE
PARTY WANTS.
2. IN DISCUSSING THE COALITION IDEA ALL REALISTIC OBSERVERS
SEEM TO AGREE THAT NEITHER PRIME MINISTER MANLEY NOR
OPPOSITION LEADER SEAGA WOULD PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN
A COALITION GOVERNMENT, NO CABINET WOULD BE BIG ENOUGH
TO HOLD THEM BOTH. NAMES HEARD MOST FREQUENTLY AS

POSSIBILITIES TO HEAD A COALITION ARE
GOVERNOR GENERAL GLASSPOLE AND FINANCE MINISTER ERIC
BELL; FOREIGN MINISTER PATTERSON SEEMS TO BE RULED OUT
BECAUSE OF DOUBTS OVER HIS ALLEGED INVOLVEMENT IN
IRANIAN BRIBERY ISSUE.

3. THERE SEEMS TO BE NO COMPELLING REASON FOR THE
PRESENT GOVERNMENT TO SHARE POWER WITH ITS RIVAL AT THIS
TIME. DESPITE UNHAPPINESS OVER SHORTAGES OF CONSUMER
GOODS, VIOLENCE AND LACK OF ECONOMIC PROGRESS,
THE GOVERNMENT'S ELECTORAL MANDATE HAS NOT
BEEN WITHDRAWN. THERE MAY BE COMPELLING TACTICAL
REASONS FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO TRY THE COALITION IDEA,
(BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF ANY REAL MOMENTUM WITHIN THE
PARTY.) AS FOR THE OPPOSITION, IT WOULD SEEM MORE LIKELY THAT
THEY ARE WELL AWARE OF THEIR
OWN UNPREPAREDNESS TO ENTER THE GOVERNMENT
AND OF THE LIKELYHOOD THAT THINGS ARE
GOING TO GET WORSE BEFORE THEY GET BETTER. THEREFORE,
THERE SEEMS TO BE LITTLE REASON FOR THE OPPOSITION
EVEN TRYING TO ENCOURAGE A COALITION IDEA AT THIS TIME.
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